East Haddam Board of Education
Regular Meeting Minutes
Municipal Office Complex, Meeting Room 1 & 2
March 11, 2026, 7:00 PM

MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT:	Keira Thompson, Chairman Jessica Hatfield, Secretary Jim Francese Terri Garrity Thea Jansky Sean Morrissey Dan Flack Melissa Ziobron
MEMBERS ABSENT:	Steve Trojan
OTHERS PRESENT:	Dr. DeBrito, Superintendent of Schools Christine Bourne, Business Manager Chris Eckert, High School Principal Sara Evans, High School Representative Faith Kalisz, High School Representative

I. CALL TO ORDER

a. Chairman Thompson called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM
b. The pledge of Allegiance was recited
c. The exit announcement was made pointing out both exit doors

II. SCHOOL PRESENTATIONS

a. High School Library Media

Library Media Specialist Joshua Strecker from Nathan Hale Ray-High School shared his "What's Great in the Library" presentation. The library currently serves as a multifunctional hub, providing essential curriculum support for media literacy, ECE, Social Studies, and Modern World History, including the Model UN program and Senior Capstone projects. Beyond academics, the department maintains a student-centered collection featuring graphic novels and subject-specific non-fiction while also hosting student-led book clubs, career exploration events, and SEL-focused

therapy dog visits. Technologically, the library staff works in collaboration with IT to manage student device troubleshooting and help desk tickets, ensuring minimal disruption to learning while also overseeing the TV and podcast studios. Recent facility upgrades, funded by a 2025 Innovation Grant, have introduced new furniture aligned with a learning commons model to support student groups like the Student Council and Class Act. Looking forward, the library aims to implement a student advisory group, expand 3D printing and electronic resources, and install lower shelving to better delineate learning spaces.

b. Agriscience Program

Dr. DeBrito recognized March as Board of Education Member month, as designated by the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education. The students of the Agriscience program crafted flower arrangements for the Board of Education members.

Nathan Hale Ray-High School principal Mr. Eckert introduced High School Agricultural Teacher Cheryl Carberry as well as Felicia Garrard. There were students and parents in the audience for the presentation. Ms. Carberry hosted a presentation detailing the current initiatives and strategic direction of the Agriscience program. The program continues to provide essential curriculum support across key areas, including animal science, plant science, and natural resources. Central to the student experience is the FFA leadership component, which emphasizes personal growth and career success through regional competitions and community service. Furthermore, the presentation highlighted the role of Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) projects in providing students with hands-on, work-based learning opportunities in entrepreneurship and research. To support these practical applications, the program utilizes specialized on-site facilities such as a greenhouse and animal lab. Looking toward future development, the program has established goals to increase total student enrollment, expand community partnerships for SAE placements, and modernize equipment within the agricultural program to remain aligned with current industry standards.

The staff also recognized the students from the first round of the Companion Animal Program who received a certificate in pet sitting.

III. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

Jennifer Pulaski, a parent of an 8th grade student discussed her student's plans for high school and respectfully asked the Board to reconsider adding Lyman Memorial School in Lebanon as an accepted school to send East Haddam students.

Anna Tromza is a parent of East Haddam students who are interested in attending Lyman Memorial school. Ms. Tromza requests the consideration for Lyman Memorial School for East Haddam residents.

IV. REPORT OF THE BOARD CHAIR

Ms. Thompson discussed the events that she attended during the past few weeks. On February 19, she attended the CABE check-in, the Purple Fund Committee met, as well as the Boad of

Education presented their capital budget. On February 26, 2026, the Board of Education held a Special Meeting to adopt their 2026-2027 budget.

On March 6, Ms. Thompson visited the East Haddam Elementary school in honor of "Read Across America month" were she read two books to students. March 4, 2026, she attended the 5th Grade Band Concert at the middle school.

On Monday, March 9, 2026, the Boad of Education presented their budget to the Board of Finance members. This meeting was an overview of the 2026-2027 budget & both boards will meet again Thursday, March 19, 2026, to review specific line items.

Mr. Francese joined Ms. Thompson on Wednesday, March 11, at the CABE event in Hartford called, "A Day on the Hill 2026" where they were able to visit legislators at the state capitol.

Ms. Thompson discussed the Parent Teacher Conferences scheduled for Wednesday, Thursday and Friday which results in an Early Dismissal day for students.

There was a brief discussion regarding the Purple Fund and the 1937 Memorandum of Agreement.

V. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Dr. DeBrito provided an update on recent district activities, noting that the "Read Across America" guest reader visits are being rescheduled following recent snow-related school closures. On March 4, 2026, Dr. DeBrito attended the 5th Grade Band Concert at Nathan Hale-Ray Middle School. She also reported on the successful administration of the Grade 11 SAT assessment on March 11, 2026, during which students completed their required state assessments.

Regarding the current week's Parent-Teacher conferences, Dr. DeBrito highlighted the inclusion of parent surveys as a critical component of the district's Strategic Plan. These surveys allow parents to provide input on the development of the "Vision of the Learner," a project that originated in the Spring. The district remains committed to advancing these goals through ongoing community collaboration.

VI. ACTION ON THE MINUTES

Motion: to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes, February 11, 2026, with the correction of Ms. Hatfields name was made by Ms. Ziobron and seconded by Ms. Hatfield.

FAVOR: (7)

OPPOSED: (0)
ABSENT: (1)
ABSTENTIONS:(0)

Motion: to approve the Special Meeting Minutes, February 26, 2026, made by Ms. Garrity and seconded by Ms. Jansky with the addition of the meeting start time as well as an expansion of item number 3, Budget Workshop and Discussion.

FAVOR: (6)
OPPOSED: (0)
ABSENT: (1)
ABSTENTIONS:(1)

VII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Policy and Instruction Subcommittee Report – Mr. Francese reported the Curriculum, Policy and Educational Programming Subcommittee convened on March 2, 2026, at 3:30 p.m. to review district academic frameworks and gather essential feedback from staff regarding the current curriculum. During the meeting, the committee identified a formal requirement to develop new elements within the district's curricular offerings to better serve student needs. To ensure district-wide consistency and clarity, the members reached an agreement to fine-tune and implement a standardized curriculum template. Additionally, the subcommittee reviewed recent state literature concerning student work-study programs and discussed the existing volunteer's policy to ensure all guidelines remain aligned with current best practices and state requirements.

b. Business & Planning Subcommittee Report – Mr. Morrissey reported that The Business and Planning Committee held their most recent meeting on February 17, 2026. During the session, members conducted a thorough review of the regular maintenance report and received a status update regarding the HVAC project at the elementary school. The committee noted that the HVAC installation is now 99% complete, with the kitchen facilities fully operational. Additionally, the committee engaged in discussions regarding food service operations and the review of bus transportation bids for the upcoming school year.

c. The Personnel and Negotiations Subcommittee reported that several recently planned meetings required rescheduling due to weather-related interruptions. To address outstanding agenda items, a revised schedule has been established. The committee is set to meet on March 23, 2026, at 5:00 PM to conduct a formal discussion regarding stipends. Following this, a meeting is scheduled for March 25, 2026, at 6:00 PM to discuss upcoming union negotiations. Additionally, the subcommittee has designated March 30, 2026, as a placeholder for a follow-up meeting to address any additional stipend requirements if necessary.

d. The East Haddam Schools Capital Improvement Committee reported that no meetings have been convened since the previous Board of Education session. Consequently, there are no new developments or updates to report currently.

e. LEARN Liaison Report – Ms. Garrity provided an update regarding her recent attendance at a LEARN meeting, where she engaged with staff from the Waterford school district regarding their

Strategic Plan. She noted that Waterford is experiencing similar demographic trends to other districts, including declining enrollment and an increasingly diverse student population. Specifically, Ms. Garrity highlighted that Waterford has seen a significant growth in student needs related to Multilingual Learners (MLL). Their strategic focus has shifted heavily toward enhancing family and community engagement. Additionally, Ms. Garrity announced an upcoming LEARN Disability Summit to be held at the Mohegan Sun Casino and indicated she would provide a comprehensive report to the Board following that event.

f. Ray Board Liaison Report – The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 17, 2026.
g. Long Range Capital Improvements Committee Liaison Report – Have not met.
h. Safety and Security Committee – Have not met since January.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

a. Discussion and possible action to create a non-lapsing Board of Education account.
The Board engaged in a discussion regarding the creation of a non-lapsing account. It was noted that this motion follows legislation passed in 2024. This fund would allow for the retention of unexpended education funds from the prior fiscal year, in accordance with state statutes.

MOTION: To approve Board of Education to create a non-lapsing account to apply unused funds up to 2% of the budget each year was made by Mr. Francese and seconded by Ms. Garrity.

FAVOR: (7)
OPPOSED: (0)
ABSENT: (1)
ABSTENTIONS:(0)

b. Discussion of possible action on Bus Bids.
The Board compared the transportation bids from both Dattco, who is the current provider of transportation for East Haddam schools as well as information from M & J Bus company.

MOTION: To award M & J Incorporation the East Haddam Public Schools transportation contract starting July 1, 2026, to June 30, 2031, was made by Ms. Jansky and seconded by Mr. Morrissey.

FAVOR: (7)
OPPOSED: (0)
ABSENT: (1)
ABSTENTIONS:(0)

c. Discussion and possible action regarding Food Service pricing. The board discussed an audit on the Food Service which showed the district is not charging enough for lunch. The board discussed increasing the price for staff lunch meals from $3.65 to $5.00.

MOTION: At start of the 2026-2027 school year to make adult lunch prices $5.00 was made by Mr. Francese and seconded by Ms. Garrity.

FAVOR: (7)
OPPOSED: (0)
ABSENT: (1)
ABSTENTIONS:(0)

d. Discussion and possible action on 180 school days for students

MOTION: To approve Thursday, June 18, 2026, as the last school day for students accounting for 180 school days was made by Ms. Hatfield and seconded by Ms. Garrity. Ms. Ziobron, Mr. Morrissey and Ms. Jansky opposed this motion. Motion passed.

FAVOR: (4)
OPPOSED: (3)
ABSENT: (1)
ABSTENTIONS:(0)

e. Discussion and possible action to add a community member to the Purple Fund Committee.

MOTION: To table item 8e was made by Ms. Ziobron and seconded by Ms. Garrity.

FAVOR: (7)
OPPOSED: (0)
ABSENT: (1)
ABSTENTIONS:(0)

f. Discussion on the following policies for first reading:
i. Policy 5113.13- Work-Study Student Employment/ Work-Release
ii. Policy 1212- School Volunteers

MOTION: To accept the first reading of Policy 5113.13 Work-Study Student Employment/ Work-Release was made by Mr. Francese and seconded by Mr. Flack.

FAVOR: (7)
OPPOSED: (0)
ABSENT: (1)
ABSTENTIONS:(0)

MOTION: To table Policy 1212 School Volunteers was made by Mr. Francese and seconded by Ms. Jansky.

FAVOR: (7)
OPPOSED: (0)
ABSENT: (1)
ABSTENTIONS:(0)

g. Discussion and possible action to include waiving the second reading on the following policies:
i. Policy 3293.2- Authorization of Signature
ii. Policy 3326- Paying for Goods and Services

MOTION: To table Policy 3293.1- Authorization of Signature and Policy 3326-Paying for Goods and Services per the Board of Education attorney & have no discussion per Robert's Rules of Order was made by Ms. Hatfield and seconded by Ms. Ziobron.

FAVOR: (7)
OPPOSED: (0)
ABSENT: (1)
ABSTENTIONS:(0)

h. Acceptance of the consent agenda 1-4

MOTION: To accept the consent agenda #1, 3 and 4 was made by Ms. Jansky and seconded by Ms. Hatfield

FAVOR: (7)
OPPOSED: (0)
ABSENT: (1)
ABSTENTIONS:(0)

IX. Audience of Citizens

None

X. Discussion on Non-Unions salaries

MOTION: To invite Superintendent Dr. DeBrito into executive session for the discussion on the Non-Union salaries was made at 9:34 by Ms. Jansky and seconded by Ms. Hatfield.

FAVOR: (7)
OPPOSED: (0)
ABSENT: (1)
ABSTENTIONS:(0)

Ms. Jansky left the meeting at 9:35 PM.

Executive session ended at 10:02 PM

XI. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: To adjourn was made by Ms. Hatfield and was seconded by Mr. Flack.

FAVOR: (6)
OPPOSED: (0)
ABSENT: (2)
ABSTENTIONS:(0)

Meeting was adjourned at 10:03 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica Hatfield
Board of Education Secretary